

March 14, 2013

Dear Chairman Welborn, Committee Members, fellow sportsmen and women:

Thank you for giving me the chance to testify in support of SB-197. I'm talking to you today as a Hunter Education instructor, a Montana hunter, and the Editor of Outdoor Life magazine. But mainly, I'm talking to you today as a parent of young children.

I would like you to consider these reasons for supporting the apprentice hunting bill:

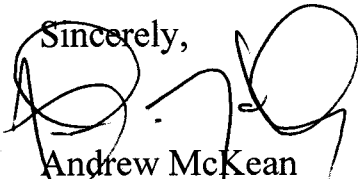
- As a father, I am fundamentally concerned about the safety of my children. Apprentice hunting is safer than traditional Hunter Education delivered instruction. Don't take our word for it, consult the experience of the 33 states with some sort of mentored hunting. After monitoring years of hunting and millions of beginning hunters, states with mentored hunting have 10 percent fewer hunting accidents than states without mentored hunting.
- As a Hunter Education instructor, I can say that the apprentice hunter program would make our FWP-delivered classes even more effective, and our instructors even more relevant. In our current arrangement, some half of our students are in Hunter Ed classes because their parents are requiring them be there. They don't have a lot of personal motivation to be there, and I've seen their apathy infect the entire class. If we gave them the chance to experience hunting prior to Hunter Ed class, I expect most of these students to enthusiastically embrace our Hunter Ed course. They'll have a context for the instruction, and more importantly, they will realize that it's the door to eventually hunting by themselves, without their mentor. Basically, the door to becoming bona fide Montana hunters. To manage Montana's wildlife, to fund FWP, and to perpetuate the remarkable American tradition of hunter-conservationists, we need more license-buying hunters, not less.
- Many opponents equate earning a Hunter Education certificate with obtaining a driver's license. There is some correlation, but I'd like to put an even sharper point on it. By requiring an experienced mentor or licensed parent to accompany the beginning hunter in the field, I expect apprentice hunters to be much, much safer than beginning

drivers. Imagine, if you will, how many fewer accidents we might have if an adult accompanied young drivers in the car during those early years of driving.

- Lastly — but maybe most importantly — are going to hear a lot from opponents about fear - fear of abusing an allowance that will result in poaching, fear of gun accidents, or fear of exposing beginning hunters to the elements. At the core, these people are afraid of giving parents the responsibility to make choices for their children. I don't think that's either fair or part of a broader Montana tradition. Instead of focusing on the fear, I encourage you to focus on the trust. Please trust Montana parents to make better decisions about when their children are ready to hunt than the state does.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. If you have any questions or require more information on my perspective, my contact information is below.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew McKean', written over the printed name.

Andrew McKean
Glasgow, Montana

Cell: 406-263-5442

Email: andrew.mckean@bonniercorp.com